

Environmental Assessment

Title: Nelson Creek Pipelines

EA Number: OR-054-04-040

Name and Location of Preparing Office: Central Oregon Resource Area, Prineville, Oregon.

Conformance and Consistency: The proposed action is consistent with the following land use plans: Two Rivers RMP, dated June 1986, and the John Day River Management Plan, Two Rivers, John Day, and Baker Resource Management Plan Amendments, dated February 2001.

Purpose and Need: The purpose of this project is to help in the development of alternative livestock water sources and to improve the riparian zone and water quality of Nelson Creek. This project is a cooperative effort between the private land owner, National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Oregon Watershed Improvement Board (OWIB), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W), Wheeler County Soil and Watershed Conservation District Board (SWCD) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Description of the Proposed Action: Two pipelines would cross a 40 acre parcel of public land as shown on the attached map. The pipeline along the north half of the parcel would be approximately 0.3 miles long and the other line, which would cross the parcel diagonally in the southwestern corner, would be 0.2 miles long. The pipeline would consist of two-inch diameter plastic pipe buried in a trench two feet deep and sixteen inches wide. After installation of the pipeline, the bare soil would be broadcast seeded to bluebunch wheatgrass and sheep fescue at an application rate of 6.0 lb/ac and 3.0 lb/ac respectively.

The majority of the project would be on private land and would involve additional pipelines, a water storage tank, watering troughs, and a pumping station on Nelson Creek. It would also entail fencing off a portion of the creek from livestock use and planting riparian woody species. Assistance would be provided through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Salmon-Trout Enhancement Program (STEP).

Alternatives: A no action alternative was considered.

| Environmental Impacts | Affected | | Critical Element | Affected | |
|-------------------------|----------|----|---------------------------------|----------|----|
| | Yes | No | | Yes | No |
| Air Quality | | X | T & E Plants | | X |
| ACEC's | | X | Tribal Concerns & Treaty Rights | | X |
| Cultural Resources | | X | Wastes, Hazardous/Solid | | X |
| Environmental Justice | | X | Water Quality, Drinking/Ground | | X |
| Farmlands, Prime/Unique | | X | Wetlands/Riparian Zones | | X |
| Floodplains | | X | Wild & Scenic Rivers | | X |
| T & E Animals | | X | Wilderness | | X |
| T & E Fish | | X | | | |

Description of Impacts: A rubber tired tractor with a backhoe would excavate the trench. Soil from the trench would be piled alongside and then replaced after installation of the pipeline. A slight mound may be present after the pipeline is covered. Both pipelines would cross rocky areas covered with a mix of native bunchgrasses and introduced annuals.

Impacts of No Action: The 0.5 miles of trench and installation of plastic pipe would not be done on public land. This would result in no physical impacts to the public land, but would make it difficult to locate the needed pipelines for two off-stream watering troughs. The cost and time to complete the water distribution phase of the project would be increased because the pipelines would have to be rerouted to avoid public land. The rerouted pipelines would need to be approximately 0.75 miles longer in order to accomplish the same objectives as the proposed project.

Cumulative and Residual Impacts: No cumulative impacts were identified for the proposed action on public land. Some surface disturbance consisting of mounded bare soil would remain for one to two years depending on how well the bluebunch wheatgrass and sheep fescue establishes. Long-term positive impacts should result to Nelson Creek due to the increased size and vegetation density of the riparian zone.

Description of Mitigation: All mitigations have been incorporated into the proposed action.

Persons/Agencies Consulted:

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| Scott Cooke | BLM, Wildlife Biologist |
| Ron Lane | BLM, Reality Specialist |
| Brent Ralston | BLM, Fisheries Biologist |
| Anna Smith | BLM, Hydrologist |
| Scott Hofer | National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Biologist |
| Spencer Hovekamp | National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Biologist |
| John Lillicrop | Private land owner |
| Vern Church | Wheeler County Watermaster |

Preparer: /S/ Lyle Andrews Date: 03/30/04

Environmental Coordinator: /S/ Danny L. Tippy Date: 03/30/04

